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THE ETHIOPIAN MOVEMENT AT INHAMBANE.

In 1908 a native leader at Inhambane prophesied that in 15 years from that time the Inhambane native christians would be able to carry on and support their own work. That would make the year of its beginning 1923. The said prophet has become the leader of an independent movement in 1918, which during the months of its organization shows itself utterly unqualified to properly conduct its affairs and support them. But the movement is here and is proving to be a serious menace to the best interests of the Kingdom. It has broken into the ranks of our own Mission and also seriously affects the Free Methodist Mission. Five out-stations have allied themselves with the movement and several from other stations have joined it. The great fact is that the movement is here. Its coming has been seen for a number of years. That it is independent and Ethiopian and has for its motto "Africa for the African" is the sad part about it.

Some are led to ask why is there such a movement and what will be its results on the work of the Kingdom and if it is an evil what can be done to counteract its influence?

The principal reason for there being such a movement among the African native is because there is in his heart a natural resentment against the coming of the white man into his country and placing him under white rule. The first that he remembers of the white man is when he came to buy or take by force his people and his land. With those even who come in contact with the white missionary and are reaping the benefits of the Gospel there is an underlying desire to be free when the right time comes, from the rule of the white man. We state this as a general desire, even though there are some who do not crave this supposed freedom.

Permit it to be said that a wrong application of the Gospel has fostered this spirit in the heart of the native. It is true that the Gospel makes men free, black as well as white, but care must be taken that that freedom is not used to further the desires of the flesh, of which Ethiopianism is full. It has been said that practically all Ethiopian movements seem to be traceable to a spirit of pride and jealousy. Such is very evident in connection with the movement here. It is thought also that excessive laudation on the one hand and unreasonable restriction of the native on the other hand have helped to precipitate this general movement.

What are the facts regarding the reasons for it being at Inhambane? The same general spirit as that underlying all Ethiopian movements is found here. To be independent of the white missionary, as before suggested, is not a new desire here, but it dates back at least ten years. Certain conditions have helped to precipitate the movement a little before schedule time. Some missionaries from the first day they became acquainted with the facts of the working of this Mission have felt the necessity for a revolution in order to bring about certain essential changes. But thinking possibly that an evolution would be more in keeping with the times and less radical, it was adopted as the policy and to our sorrow has proved to be a failure. From the standpoint of the leaders of the independent movement they have not been granted sufficient liberty. True the power that they desired has not been granted to them. But on the other hand all the power that they could possibly use to the advancement of the Kingdom has been granted them and they have abused it.

The Home Missionary Society, which is a misnomer, is an example of the attempts of this mission to place power, authority and opportunity within the hands of the native leaders. An attempt was made to bring this society under the control of the Church, which was very strenuously resented by some of the native pastor-teachers. Finally the society aimed at governing the Church, controlling the funds raised on the field and seeking also to dispense the funds that came from home for the support of the work, even the appropriations. The members also passed resolutions directly contrary to the policy of our Church. For example it was voted by them that no one could be married by a native minister without the payment of five dollars to him and that no young man could be married unless he had in his possession from $100.00 to $200.00. The members also went so far as to state that the Bishop had no right to make the appointments without first consulting them. Thus the society became a hindrance and an obstacle to the progress of the work rather than a help. After due prayer and careful consideration there was a unanimous consent to disband the socalled Home Missionary Society. This is one of the principal reasons for the crisis we face. Because of this decision to disband the Home Missionary Society, some of the native leaders state that they are being deprived of their rights, powers and authority. If not granting them all the power they desired deprives them of their just rights, the missionaries who urged the change stand guilty of the charges made against them.

The leader of the movement is Muti M.Sikobele.He it was prophesied in 1903 that this Mission would be conducted by natives in fifteen years from that date.For years he has been in correspondence with his brother,who is one of the leaders of the Ethiopian movement among his--the Bahlengwe-- tribe, which has for its aim an independent native government.The said Muti M.Sikobele has been asked to lead the movement among this people and we are firmly convinced that this independent movement in our midst is the initial step towards a proposed concerted movement.

In June 1917 the said Muti M.Sikobele was appointed by Bishop Johnson to work in the Limpopo Circuit.For various reasons he did not go to to the work to which he had been appointed.The principal reason so he states for his not going to his work was that the missionaries would not pay him the salary he asked for.He requested fifty escudos monthly and the mission, through its finance committee, pledged to pay him thirty escudos each month, with the understanding that if this amount was not sufficient, after a trial, the salary would be increased.The refusal to pay the salary demanded gave Muti M.Sikobele,according to his opinion,sufficient justifiable reason to leave the Mission and organise an independent movement.From investigations it has been discovered that previous to January 1918,and while receiving thirty escudos a month from the Mission,this native leader was arranging to organise an independent movement in our midst and had made application to the government to carry on its work.

As to what effects the movement will have on the Kingdom,there is only one answer:They will be disastrous.Any movement that has for its motto :"Africa for the African" is a menace to the best interests of the African and to the Kingdom.Generally the leaders of the Ethiopian movements are unequipped to do good service and immoral as well.Beer drinking and polygamy are tolerated by many of the ordained men.Ethiopianism is a compromise with paganism and thus cannot win the African from paganism to christianity. Neither can it impede the progress of Islam.A movement that divides and subdivides naturally lacks the power and therefore throws opn widely the doors to the Moslem propaganda.

How shall such a movement be counteracted? If it is a menace and impedes the progress of the Gospel and defeats the purposes of christianity it must in some way be counteracted.There can be no compromise with it.Such

would be fatal.It would mean a compromise with the works of darkness.That it must be dealt with patiently and firmly,there is no argument.The native is passing through a period of transition and such a period has its dangers and

It is a call to earnest prayer.Nothing can be accomplished without this first essential to all success.Second,the government should be impressed with the fact that such a movement in this province is dangerous,and even though clothed in the garb of religion is in the main political and seeks to overthrow the rule of established European governments.It should be shown also that Ethiopianism spells the defeat of of all that aims fowards the physical,intellectual and moral regeneration of the native.Third the Missions at work in this province should enlarge their staff of white workers and increase the number of their headquarters and establish well equipped training schools for native leaders,so that there will be no room for Ethiopian and independent movements in our midst.Fourth,in our own particular case to prevent the financing of the independent movement now in our midst Johannesburg should have a branch of our Mission among the Inhambane natives of our communion who are there.They should be ministered to by missionaries and workers of our own Mission,not for denominational purposes,but to save Inhambane from Ethiopian movements as far as we are able.The Transvaal is not entirely responsible for the independent movement in our midst,but the Transvaal is the responsible part for the financing of the movement here.Minus the financial support of the Inhambane boys in the Transvaal the movement here could not succeed.It is being supported today very largely by gifts from the Inhambane natives,some of our Mission,in the Transvaal.Thus not to care for the members of our own Mission in the Transvaal is throwing open the doors for the propagation and success of Ethiopianism in our midst This we dare not do. If these four suggestions are worked out in detail we are assured that the work of the Church will grow and make progress here and Ethiopianism be defeated.Minus these efforts to defeat Ethiopianism and firmly establish the true Church of Christ,Africa,of which Inhambane is a part,is doomed to remain the Dark Continent,whether under Islam or Ethiopianism.